

REFUGEE

Arizona Refugee Resettlement Journal

resettlement

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CELEBRATIONS IN PHOENIX, TUCSON

WORLD REFUGEE DAY DRAWS HUGE CROWDS

by Robin Dunn Marcos, Phoenix Area Director,
International Rescue Committee

More than 100 people attended the International Rescue Committee-sponsored brown-bag lunch in honor of World Refugee Day June 20. The event was facilitated by former refugees and current IRC staff members, Miro Marinovich and Deo Baransaka.

I had the honor of welcoming the participants and read an excerpt of the UNHCR's High Commissioner's comments regarding WRD.

The refugee panelists were:

Helen Kuyembeh, Sierra Leone

After completing her bachelor's degree in education at Freetown University, Helen worked for the Department of Development in Sierra Leone. Helen left Sierra Leone for England where she completed her master's degree in international development. Unfortunately, only one year after Helen's return to Sierra Leone, war broke out. She and her family faced many threats because of her position in Sierra Leone's government, and the family was forced to leave their country. First they

fled to Conakry, Guinea and then to Gambia where her family lived as refugees until resettled in Phoenix. Helen's first job in Phoenix was at a youth group home, but after a year she obtained her current job with the City of Phoenix's Head Start Program. Helen has also actively served as a foster parent for unaccompanied refugee minors.

John Majok, Sudan

John Majok a southern Sudanese youth, arrived in Tucson on June 4, 2001. His initial excitement from being in the United States was dampened when he was



SPECTATORS ENJOYING THE SPECTACLE — More than 300 people enjoyed the first World Refugee Day celebration in Tucson June 29. The event included welcoming speeches, a reading of a proclamation, food and entertainment.

taken to his apartment, rather than to the university. Nineteen days after arriving, John began his first job. Only weeks later, John enrolled and started taking classes at Pima College. He took his entrance exam, tested into the honors program at Pima and has continued to take honor-level classes. Last semester John took 19 units and was the highest-level honor student at Pima College. He hopes to complete his classes at Pima and transfer to the University of Arizona next spring. This will bring him one step closer to fulfilling his goal of becoming an attorney in international law. Between work and school, John completed a translator class through Pima County Adult Education. John's first trip in the United States was to Washington, D.C., accompanied by two volunteers. Nicole from the DC IRC office scheduled John's presentations for various meetings. People who attended the meeting commented that his presentations were very well-prepared. For those in the Tucson IRC, John is our ambassador; for the Sudanese youth, John is a respected role model.

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A LETTER FROM THE STATE COORDINATOR

Dear friends and colleagues:

Emma Lazarus' words found on the bronze plaque of the Statue of Liberty's pedestal taken from her poem, *The New Colossus*, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost, to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door," have long expressed The United States' honorable heritage as a refuge for those fleeing tyranny and seeking safety and freedom.

This moving invitation reverberates not far from Ground Zero, site of the tragic terrorist attacks that leveled the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center and killed and injured thousands of people Sept. 11, 2001. These acts of terrorism have Americans wary of ambiguous and capricious enemies. Subsequently, patriotism in our country has soared, and we are working harder to eliminate the threats of danger against us and our nation. One major effort has been the organization of the Homeland Security Office, established to develop and coordinate the implementation of a comprehensive national strategy to secure the United States from terrorist threats or attacks. Some of the strategic efforts include easing the exchange of information among government agencies relating to immigration and visa matters and coordination among such agencies to prevent terrorists and terrorist materials and supplies from getting into the United States.

After the terrorist attacks, the flow of refugees into the United States fell dramatically, due to the temporary suspension of the refugee resettlement program, the slow resumption of refugee processing two months later and the new security precautions adopted by the government. As of July 31, the United States had admitted 20,417 new refugees of the 70,000 refugees that President Bush authorized for admission this year. At this same time last year, 53,000 refugees had arrived in the United States. By the end of this federal fiscal year, the United States will likely have accepted fewer than 25,000 refugees. This represents 25,000 out of the 70,000 authorized for admission, out of 37 million refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide⁽¹⁾.

On Aug. 20, U.S. refugee advocates began a campaign to restore the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program and to reverse the trend of diminishing annual refugee admissions into the United States.

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The Department of Economic Security is not responsible for opinions or views stated in bylined articles.

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McCain Supports Refugee Admissions

Editor's Note: This was originally an op-ed piece in *The Boston Globe* that ran June 18, 2002 on page A13.

by Sen. John McCain and Ambassador Winston Lord

WELCOMING REFUGEES IS IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST

In December 2000, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted a Resolution naming June 20 as World Refugee Day. It was hoped that this commemorative day would reaffirm the values on which international agreements to protect refugees are based. Tragically, the attacks on Sept. 11 have only exacerbated a global retreat on these values. The U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program is a case in point.

The number of refugees allowed, under the annual determination made by the president in consultation with Congress, has been cut in half over the last decade. Moreover, during this same decade, more than 135,000 refugees did not make it into the United States because the actual arrivals have annually fallen far below the numbers authorized. And the numbers of refugees admitted since Sept. 11 suggest that this year will see the lowest number of refugees arriving in the history of the program.

The responsibility for this decline is multifold: The government agencies responsible for refugee admissions need to work with the private voluntary agencies to ensure that these ceilings are reached. And Congress and the administration need to ensure that the overall ceilings are increased to their historic levels while providing rigorous oversight to the agencies charged with refugee admissions.

This decline in support for refugees is baffling considering that it is one of the few foreign policy issues that bridges what is often a wide gulf between realists who emphasize national interests and idealists who emphasize national values. Welcoming refugees fleeing persecution both honors our values and promotes our interests.

This is further underscored by the fact that party affiliation has never defined refugee politics in the United

This decline in support for refugees is baffling considering that it is one of the few foreign policy issues that bridges what is often a wide gulf between realists ... and idealists ...

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CAMBODIANS MAY BE DEPORTED FORCIBLY

Senior officials of the United States and Cambodian governments acknowledged recently that they plan to permit the forcible deportation of Cambodians in the United States to Cambodia.

More than 200,000 people with Cambodian backgrounds live in the United States, and nearly all of them arrived as refugees or are the children of refugees. Their flight to the United States followed years of misery under the Khmer Rouge communist dictatorship, which was responsible for 2 million deaths. Before the Khmer Rouge period, during the Vietnam War, many Cambodians in the United States fought alongside American troops.

"Cambodians risked their lives moving to this country for freedom and a better life," said Samkhann Khoeun, executive director of the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association of Lowell, Mass. "They've already lost so much. Forced deportation would be devastating for them, their children and their families who stay here."

Many Cambodians and others argue that deportation is unfair, because the offenses that could trigger it were allegedly committed years before the deportation policies were announced, and because the potential deportees have already paid the criminal penalties imposed on them by judges. In addition,

many say they had poor legal representation in their trials and were pressured by Immigration and Naturalization Service staff to accept "final orders of removal" in exchange for temporary release from indefinite detention. Many continue to assert their innocence.

American and Cambodian government officials indicate that forcible deportation will be pursued against Cambodians in the United States who are not citizens, have been convicted of crimes determined to be "aggravated felonies" and have been issued "final orders of removal." The definition of "aggravated felony" was expanded in 1996 to include nonviolent crimes, such as shoplifting, driving while intoxicated and marijuana possession.

Nearly 1,400 Cambodians in the United States could be deported soon if the international agreement is implemented. In addition, advocates warn that the ruling could harshly impact the tens of thousands of Cambodians in the United States who do not have criminal records but are not yet citizens. If found guilty of crimes, they could also face deportation and be barred permanently from re-entry to the United States.

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WORLD REFUGEE DAY CELEBRATED IN ARIZONA

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CHILDREN OF THE WORLD — *This group of Vietnamese children was one of several entertainers representing many different countries during World Refugee celebrations in Tucson. Other countries represented through song and dance were Afghanistan, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Burundi, the Congo, the former Soviet Union, Iran, Nigeria, Rwanda and Sudan.*

Mohammad Gharib Nawaz, Afghanistan

Mohammad, an Afghan youth, arrived in Phoenix in September 2001. Before coming to Arizona, Mohammed lived as a refugee in Pakistan for three years after his family fled the rule of the Taliban. Mohammad is an accomplished keyboard player and singer. One of Mohammad's major accomplishments is that he performed for actress Angelina Jolie on her tour of the refugee camps in Pakistan. Last year, for World Refugee Day, Mohammad and his siblings performed as part of UNHCR's celebration. He has recently returned from the IRC-sponsored Refugee Youth Retreat to the Grand Canyon.

World Refugee Day was a great success in Phoenix and Tucson, thanks to all these panelists and the audience's participation. We would also like to thank Starbucks, who donated five boxes of coffee; Basha's Supermarkets, who donated two cases of water; and the Phoenix Police Department, who supplied cakes, donuts and muffins for the event.

WORLD REFUGEE DAY IN TUCSON

by Miro Marinovich, Tucson Coordinator, International Rescue Committee

On June 29, World Refugee Day was celebrated in Tucson for the first time. The refugee resettlement agencies (International Rescue Committee, Catholic Social Service, Episcopal Community Services and Jewish Family and Children Service), mutual assistance agency (Tucson International Alliance of

Refugee Communities) and refugee communities organized, sponsored and coordinated the event.

For the five months prior to the event, representatives of the respective agencies were meeting on a regular basis with the goal to make the event successful. The hard work and careful planning paid off. The event was deemed a complete success.

The celebration took place at the Northwest Neighborhood Center which donated the space for this event. Master of ceremonies was local well-known radio anchor Betsy Bruce, who committed to emcee the event as a volunteer. She gave opening remarks and welcomed all the guests.

Betsy Runkuno, a refugee from Uganda, then explained the reason June 20 was selected as World Refugee Day, and she read a message from the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Rudd Lubbers.

Sio Castillo, community outreach director from the mayor's office, was introduced, and she read the City of Tucson Office of the Mayor's Proclamation of the World Refugee Day on the mayor's behalf.

I followed, delivering a welcoming speech and explaining current slowdown in refugee admissions. I also urged the president and the administration to expedite refugee processing and admissions and to raise the refugee ceilings and resources for the next fiscal year.

Dino Kadic, a 6½-year-old refugee from Bosnia, presented a certificate of appreciation to Congressman Kolbe. On the congressman's behalf, his District Director Patricia Klein accepted the certificate and apologized in Kolbe's name for not being able to attend this event, due to a family emergency.

After welcomes, recognitions and speeches, the entertainment began.

Two young children from the Owl and Panther Group, a program of the Hopi Center for Prevention and Resolution of Violence, delivered their poems about their personal refugee experiences to the more than 300 guests gathered in the center.

More entertainment followed. Refugee groups from Afghanistan, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Burundi, the Congo, the former Soviet Union, Iran, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sudan and Vietnam performed their traditional dancing and singing.

Tucson Police Department was informed about the event, and they took it upon themselves to patrol the area for security purposes. Their efforts and presence

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McCain Supports Refugee Admissions

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States. There are champions and detractors on both sides of the aisle. The rationale behind support for the program varies. Some see economic interest, a continuing pool of labor willing to accept jobs that many American citizens would not consider. Others see political interest. The refugee program proved itself a valuable tool during the Cold War years — a way to embarrass our foes and assure our allies we were willing to assume some of the burdens created by superpower rivalries.

Some recognize what refugees are capable of bringing to this country: the philosophers, artists, businessmen and statesman like Hanna Arendt, Albert Einstein, Marc Chagall, Andrew Grove and Henry

Kissinger. The very qualities possessed by refugees, the immediate knowledge of what it means to be oppressed and the precious nature of freedom, contributes profoundly to the genius that is America. Refugees, like students with disparate backgrounds who help enrich university life, revitalize and enrich America's founding principles of freedom, equality, and opportunity.

Some see a moral obligation to save lives based on the traditions of a nation founded by refugees for refugees. They would argue that for a tiny fraction of our foreign assistance budget, the refugee admissions program sets the standard that the rest of the world follows on refugees. This argument would seem to be buttressed by the fact that as the U.S. commitment to refugees has waned, so, too, has much of the world's.

The plight of refugees and their hopes for a better life have increasingly become more difficult to resolve over the past decade. In Europe, numerous small parties holding extreme views on immigrants and refugees have gained greater acceptance, leading to policies that have severely tightened restrictions on refugees and asylum seekers. In Australia, the government is reeling from its ham-handed handling of asylum seekers arriving by boat. And in the United States, the attacks of Sept. 11 have led some policy makers to believe that the program is a political liability and an easy mark for the budget ax. These individuals can't seem to grasp that the principles on which this nation was founded must be defended as zealously as its people and its territory.

While the United States cannot hope to save every refugee in need, we can do much better in leading a world grown cold to the plight of the most oppressed among us. For millions of people around the world, the promise of liberty may seem as remote as winning a lottery. But the promise itself, the hope that it engenders, is not something that anyone who has ever been denied freedom would dismiss.

Sometimes hope and a desire for freedom are all there are to keep you alive. This was true for Jews escaping Hitler, for Hungarian freedom fighters, for Vietnamese fleeing by the thousands on leaky boats, for demonstrators who paraded the "Goddess of Democracy" through Tiananmen Square, for Rwandans escaping genocide and for Afghan women fleeing the repressive Taliban.

At the core of all these valid arguments to help refugees is a simple truth: People's lives are at stake. Saving those refugees who are in imminent danger or have no hope of returning to their country unequivocally defines our values and supports our interests. ■

Source: The IRC Web site at www.theirc.org/.

World Refugee Day

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were much appreciated, even though the whole event passed without a single incident.

Plenty of food was served at the event. There was an order of 300 mandarin chicken dinners that refugee agencies provided. In addition to the chicken, refugee communities cooked and shared their traditional foods.

Overall, the atmosphere, the energy and the sight were beautiful. Traditional clothing and a taste of different traditional foods were a treat for the many attendees. ■



TRADITIONAL DANCING STARTS NEW TRADITION — *This group of traditional Nigerian dancers helped more than 300 people from the Tucson area start a new tradition: celebrating World Refugee Day. In addition to the entertainment, guests enjoyed traditional foods from several different cultures.*

CSS HOSTS PREMIERE GET-TOGETHER

More than 50 representatives of agencies that assist refugees recently took a few hours out of their busy schedules and hectic summer days to enjoy each other's company and discuss best practices during Catholic Social Service's get-together.

"This time is for you, said Barbara Klimek, Ph.D., resettlement director for the refugee program at Catholic Social Service in Phoenix. "So often, we get so busy working with our clients that we don't take time for ourselves.

"We don't have an agenda today," she continued. "We just want you to socialize and mingle, share ideas with others and talk to people you don't yet know. We hope today will be the first annual gathering of this type."

Many faces were put with names, many contacts were renewed and many new ones were made over refreshing fruit punch and delicious international appetizers.

He also spoke of his confusion. His parents told him to do just as the American students did, while the American students continually teased him about his accent, and his teachers told him to be proud of his heritage.

Even though the gathering was primarily for socializing, the attendees also learned something from the young comic on the video player. ■



WARM WELCOME ON A WARM DAY — Barbara Klimek, Ph.D., resettlement director for the refugee program at Catholic Social Service in Phoenix, welcomes more than 50 guests to a social gathering for those who work closely with refugees. It was an opportunity to take a break from their daily duties, get to know each other and get out of the warm Phoenix summer. Watching is Jabir Al-Garawi, Executive Director, Arizona Refugee Community Center.



ALL EYES ON A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE — During a recent social gathering, hosted by Catholic Social Service, those who work with refugees got to view the resettlement process from the eyes of a child: Hmong "comedian, bilingual storyteller, rap artist, actor and multicultural activist" Tou Ger Xiong, who arrived in this country when he was only 9 years old.

About an hour into the festivities, Klimek played a video of a young Hmong self-proclaimed "comedian, bilingual storyteller, rap artist, actor and multicultural activist" named Tou Ger Xiong. He arrived in the United States when he was only 9 years old. His comic routine — taped in front of an audience of children and their parents who had recently arrived from Laos and other countries and called Project Respectism — gave the attendees a different perspective. The comedian talked about his first introduction to the bathroom: He couldn't figure out where the tree was!

DEPORTATIONS POSSIBLE

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The Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC), the national organization for Americans from Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, is opposed to the forcible deportation of people to any country they fled as refugees.

"Most of the people who would be deported have families and children in the States, but no one to turn to in Southeast Asia," said KaYing Yang, SEARAC's executive director. "Since many of them left Asia as children, they can't speak Cambodian well and don't know how to make a living in Cambodia."

A survey recently conducted by SEARAC revealed that Cambodians who could face deportation were, on average, 9 years old when they entered the United States and had lived in this country for 20 years. More than half of the survey respondents were their families' primary source of income.

Source: This news release appeared on the SEARAC Web site. To read the complete article, please visit www.searac.org/prcam05_02.html. ■

FUTURE OF U.S. RRP AT STAKE

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Advocates see the campaign as the last substantive opportunity to influence the 2003 federal fiscal year (FFY) Presidential Determination and the funding decisions that would support U.S. refugee processing and resettlement services for the coming year.

The President announces the number of refugees to be admitted during FFY-2003 when he signs the annual Presidential Determination reauthorizing the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program on Oct. 1. The world watches how America will respond to refugee crises, and other countries who accept refugees follow suit. If by October of this year, the United States does not maintain refugee admissions at historic levels, future U.S. refugee resettlement policy is uncertain. This uncertainty has champions of U.S. refugee rescue efforts troubled. The U.S. Committee for Refugees' Executive Director Lavinia Limon, stressed the global impact of U.S. decisions on refugee resettlement in the Aug. 21 *Washington Post*: "Their entire life is in limbo," she said. "There are very real human consequences to this slowdown." Since Sept. 11, the

U.S. approach to the worldwide refugee problem has been marked by caution and tentativeness, Limon said. She said the temporary suspension of the program and the tighter security requirements are understandable but predicted that other countries are likely to follow the lead of the United States, which accepts more refugees than any other nation. "As the U.S. is seen to diminish its commitments to protect refugees, other countries can feel emboldened to do what maybe they wanted to do in the first place," Limon said."

Refugee advocacy groups are publicly urging President Bush to authorize at least 100,000 refugee admissions in the next fiscal year to make up for this year's shortfall. The Aug. 21 *Washington Post* reported that "The refugee resettlement program, enacted by Congress in 1980, is a small and distinct component of the system by which people gain legal entry to the United States. The law defines refugees as people outside the United States who are unable or unwilling to return to their home country because

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RTAp/M ANNOUNCES CONTRACT AWARDS

The Targeted Assistance Project in Maricopa County (RTAp/M) recently announced contract awards, effective July 1. The program offers refugees an opportunity to receive free training and counseling that may facilitate their transition to economic self-sufficiency.

Case Management — Case management provides intake and follow up for clients who are interested in receiving occupational/vocational education. Life skills training, child care and general transportation are also coordinated by case managers.

- Catholic Social Service of Central and Northern Arizona Inc. (602) 944-1819, ext. 20 or 15.
- S.T. Gregg and Associates, (602) 253-0152.

Employment-Related Services — Employment-related services provide intake and follow up for clients who have had unusually great difficulty in securing and retaining employment.

- Anadyne Development (Habilitation and Independent Living Specialists Inc.) (602) 206-2909.
- International Rescue Committee Inc. (602) 433-2440, ext. 213.

Occupational/Vocational Education — Occupational/vocational education provides training in various vocational areas. Training typically lasts for six months.

- Maricopa Community College (Maricopa Skill Center), (602) 238-4300.

Life Skills Training — Life skills training provides training for various employment-related life skills

and is available to clients receiving occupational/vocational training.

- Maricopa Community College (Maricopa Skill Center) offers a one-week course from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Arizona Refugee Community Center (Formerly Iraqi Association in Arizona) offers a two-week course from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., (602) 995-3496.

General Transportation — General transportation primarily provides transportation for clients to occupational/vocational education and life skills training sites. Children of clients are also transported to child-care providers en route. Valley Transit tickets and passes are also available for clients needing transportation to job interviews and work (on a temporary basis).

- Maricopa County Human Services – Special Transportation, (602) 506-4844.

Eligibility Criteria: Important changes to the program's client eligibility criteria will enable more refugees to utilize the services. The changes are:

- Be at least 17 years of age.
- Be refugees, asylees or entrants.
- Have resided in the United States between six months and five years.
- Be secondary/tertiary wage earners (reside in a household that includes at least one employed adult) if vocational education/life skills training is desired.

For more information, please call any of the case management or employment-related services contractors. ■

FUTURE OF U.S. RRP AT STAKE

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they fear persecution.” The article goes on to say that “Suzy M. Cop, regional director of the International Rescue Committee, said that this year her organization has resettled only 25 refugees in the Washington area, compared with 389 at this time last year. Nationally, Cop added, ‘it is grimly apparent that some 50,000 opportunities for refugees to restart their lives here may be lost.’”

Our country’s history includes overcoming foreboding obstacles and challenges, and Americans have rallied to champion many important causes. In an April 1999 White House speech, Nobel Laureate and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel said,

“Fifty-four years ago to the day, a young Jewish boy from a small town in the Carpathian Mountains woke up, not far from Goethe’s beloved Weimar, in a place of eternal infamy called Buchenwald. He was finally free, but there was no joy in his heart. He thought there never would be again. Liberated a day earlier by American soldiers, he remembers their rage at what they saw. And even if he lives to be a very old man, he will always be grateful to them for that rage

and also for their compassion. Though he did not understand their language, their eyes told him what he needed to know — that they, too, would remember and bear witness. And now, I stand before you, Mr. President — Commander-in-Chief of the army that freed me and tens of thousands of others — and I am filled with a profound and abiding gratitude to the American people.”

For more information on efforts to restore the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program, visit www.refugeesusa.org. For more information about the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program, visit www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/orr. The Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program will remain abreast of developments concerning U.S. refugee processing, admissions, resettlement and the corresponding funding.

Sincerely,



Charles Shipman

⁽¹⁾Source: World Refugee Survey 2002, U.S. Committee for Refugees, Washington, D.C. ■

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